

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T BANGKOK 4152

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON U.S.-THAI RELATIONS AND DOMESTIC
ISSUES

1. IN ADDITION TO OUR DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE TEMCO
ISSUE (BANGKOK 4120), PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT AND I
ALSO DISCUSSED SEVERAL OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST DURING
MY FAREWELL CALL MARCH 12. I WENT OVER WITH HIM AGAIN
THE RATIONALE FOR THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND
AND STRESSED MY BELIEF THAT THERE ARE STRONG ADVANTAGES FOR
THAILAND IN NOT SETTING A FIRM DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL. I TOLD
SENI THAT IF THE NEW THAI GOVERNMENT DID SO, HANOI, WHICH STILL
HAS SOME 50,000 TROOPS IN LAOS, WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO STEP UP
ITS AGGRESSION AND WOULD MAKE NO MOVES TOWARD PEACE OR CON-
CILIATION IN THE INDOCHINA AREA. IMPOSITION OF A FIXED DEADLINE
WOULD REMOVE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR NEGOTIATING WITH HANOI AND
MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO USE A PHASED REDUCTION IN THE U.S.
PRESENCE TO EXTRACT CONCESSIONS.

2. SENI SAID HE PERSONALLY AGREED WITH THIS VIEW BUT THAT THE
18-MONTH DEADLINE PROPOSED BY HIS GOVERNMENT RESULTED FROM
"HORSE-TRADING" WITHIN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY AND THE CABINET.

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HE REITERATED, AS HE HAD BEFORE, THAT HE AND OTHER MODER-

ATES IN THE CABINET WERE UNDER STRONG LEFTIST PRESSURE AND HAD NO ALTERNATIVE TO ADOPTING THIS TIME LIMIT IN ORDER TO PRESERVE UNITY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. SPEAKING STRONGLY, SENI SAID HE HATED HORSE-TRADING AND WANTED TO ACT ON PRINCIPLE, BUT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE. HE REMARKED WRYLY THAT CHATCHAI, RUMORED TO BECOME FOREIGN MINISTER IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, IS NOW SAYING HE WILL REMOVE ALL U.S. FORCES WITHIN 6 MONTHS.

3. ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF U.S.-THAI RELATIONS, SENI REFLECTED THAT HE HAD SPENT 5 YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES DURING WORLD WAR II AND THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND MANY AMERICANS INDIVIDUALLY HAD BEEN GREAT FRIENDS OF THAILAND AND OF HIM PERSONALLY. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT "TIME MOVES ON". THAILAND IS NOW TOLD THAT IT IS SUPPOSED TO STAND ON ITS "OWN LEGS". THE PROBLEM, SENI SAID, IS "HOW MANY LEGS WE HAVE".

4. TURNING TO THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION, SENI WENT OVER THE GROUND WE HAD DISCUSSED PREVIOUSLY (BANGKOK 3621) REGARDING THE ACTIVITIES OF "RADICALS" IN THAILAND WHO ARE WELL ORGANIZED AND WELL FINANCED. THIS, HE SAID, MAKES RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT MOST DIFFICULT. SENI SAID THAT MANY THAI ARE NOW CALLING FOR NEW ELECTIONS. IT IS HIS VIEW, HOWEVER, THAT ELECTIONS NOW WOULD PRODUCE A PARLIAMENT EVEN FURTHER TO THE LEFT THAN THE ONE ELECTED IN JANUARY.

5. SENI LAID A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE BLAME FOR THE CURRENT MESS AT THE FEET OF THOSE "STARRY-EYES" INDIVIDUALS WHO DRAFTED THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION. THIS DOCUMENT, HE SAID, DOES NOT FIT CURRENT CONDITIONS. IT HAS CREATED A SITUATION IN WHICH THE PRESS, STUDENTS AND "THAI IN THE COFFEE SHOPS" ARE ABLE TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH ARE NOT IN THAILAND'S NATIONAL INTEREST. SENI CONCLUDED BY NOTING HE IS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THAILAND'S EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY.
KINTNER

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